

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 SS-20 L-03 NSC-07 SP-03 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 /066 W

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R 201212Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3732

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CINCPAC

CINCPACAF

S E C R E T BANGKOK 8801

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, TH

SUBJECT: US FORCE WITHDRAWALS: COMPUTER THREAT TO US CREDIBILITY

REF: MACTHAI 251054Z MAY 74

1. LATEST OFFICIAL US MILITARY STRENGTH REPORT (REFTEL) SHOWS THAT US MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THAILAND AS OF MAY 23 STILL NUMBER ALMOST 35,000 (34,969) AFTER ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWALS THIS CALENDAR YEAR INVOLVING REDUCTIONS OF SOME 2500 PERSONNEL SPACES. RTG SUPREME COMMAND HAS EMPHASIZED THEIR SERIOUS CONCERN THAT THAI PUBLIC DOES NOT BELIEVE THE US IS ACTUALLY WITHDRAWING PERSONNEL FROM THAILAND, AND PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT THE THAI MILITARY IS CONSPIRING WITH US TO FOOL THE PUBLIC REGARDING OUR CONTINUED PRESENCE. IT IS TO COUNTER THIS CRITICISM THAT GENERAL KRIANGSAK HAS ENCOURAGED MAXIMUM PUBLICITY FOR REDEPLOYMENTS AND PROPOSED THE CONTINUING SERIES OF MILITARY WITHDRAWAL ANNOUNCEMENTS.

2. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE UNDERSTAND THAT DOD SPOKESMAN HAS USED STRENGTH FIGURE OF 33,000 FOR US PERSONNEL IN THAILAND AS OF JUNE 1, IN REPLYING TO PRESS QUERIES. OUR LAST OFFICIAL FIGURE ANNOUNCED IN THAILAND WAS "ABOUT 35,000" AS OF DECEMBER 1973. SINCE THAT TIME WE HAVE ANNOUNCED WITHDRAWALS OF 300 US ARMY SPECIAL FORCES IN MARCH AND DOD ANNOUNCED THE WITHDRAWAL OF 550 A-7 SQUADRON PERSONNEL IN APRIL. THE ANNOUNCED REDEPLOYMENTS IN MAY SHOULD HAVE

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REDUCED USAF STRENGTH IN COUNTRY BY ANOTHER 1500; ALTHOUGH THIS

FIGURE HAS NOT BEEN RELEASED HERE, BOTH THE RTG SUPREME COMMAND AND THE PRESS HAVE BEEN MAINTAINING RUNNING TOTALS. WE HAVE LARGELY AVOIDED INCLUDING PERSONNEL FIGURES IN RECENT STATEMENTS BECAUSE THE OFFICIAL STRENGTH REPORTS WE RECEIVE CONTINUE TO SHOW US PERSONNEL IN COUNTRY TOTALLING WELL ABOVE THOSE FIGURES THAT THE PRESS ARE USING BASED ON OFFICIAL STATEMENTS.

3. WE UNDERSTAND HERE THAT SOME OF THE TROUBLE IN THE HIGH FIGURES RECURRING IN WEEKLY STRENGTH REPORTS RESULTS FROM INCREASED DEPENDENCE ON ADP ROSTERS IN PACOM AREA AND CONFUSION BETWEEN FACES AND SPACES IN COMPUTER INPUT DATA. OUR COMPUTER REPORTS ALSO APPARENTLY LAG WELL BEHIND REAL TIME; FOR EXAMPLE, IN ONE RECENT DETAILED CHECK OF A 2000-MAN ROSTER, THERE WERE 768 LINE ERRORS IN COMPUTER DATA COMPARED WITH ACTUAL NAME LISTING. HOWEVER, WE FEEL THAT EVEN OUR BEST FRIENDS IN SUPREME COMMAND WILL BEGIN TO DOUBT OUR CREDIBILITY IF OUR REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT TO THE RTG DUE JUNE 15 STILL SHOWS 35,000 AMERICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN THAILAND.

4. ALTHOUGH WE MAY BE ABLE TO SLIDE OVER PERSONNEL FIGURES IN THE NEXT ROUND OF RTG ANNOUNCEMENTS TO BE RELEASED THIS WEEK FOR JUNE WITHDRAWALS, WE BELIEVE WE MUST BE PREPARED TO MAKE A CREDIBLE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE END OF JUNE OF TOTAL PERSONNEL REDUCTIONS ACCOMPLISHED IN 1974. THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE URGENT ACTION IS REQUIRED TO SORT OUT MILITARY REPORTING PROCEDURES AND RECHECK ALL ROSTERS SO THAT WE CAN ARRIVE AT VALID OFFICIAL STRENGTH REPORTS WHICH WILL SUPPORT OUR COMMITMENT TO THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT AND OUR PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND IS BEING REDUCED.

5. WE ALSO BELIEVE IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO RTG AND US IMAGE HERE IF ACTUAL, REPEAT ACTUAL, US MILITARY STRENGTH IN THAILAND IS DOWN TO 32,200 BY JUNE 30, SINCE THIS BENCH MARK HAS CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE IN THAI CONTEXT AND WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH NUMBERS OF AIRCRAFT AND SUPPORTING PERSONNEL SCHEDULED FOR REDEPLOYMENT BEFORE JULY 1.

MASTERS

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## Message Attributes

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